

For six days work may be done and the seventh day is a day of complete rest. (31:15)

Rabbeinu Bachya says that *Shabbos* is the principle of faith. It is equivalent to all the *mitzvos* because it confirms our belief in the creation of the world. As we believe that Hashem created the world in six days, we affirm that He rested on the seventh. Throughout Rabbinic literature, *Chazal* underscore the *mitzvah* of *Shabbos* and emphasize its significance. Throughout the ages, Jews have sacrificed material comfort - and even their lives - in observance of this *mitzvah*. The following story reinforces this idea: *Horav Simcha Kaplan, Shlita*, Rav of Tzfas, relates that when he studied at the *Mirrer Yeshivah* in Europe, he boarded at the home of a family that had one child - a son. One *erev Shabbos*, he noticed the husband preparing to go to the market. His wife reminded him, "Today is *Erev Shabbos*, be sure to come home early." When he returned from the *Yeshivah* after *Minchah*, he noticed the lady standing by the window murmuring, "It is almost *Shabbos*." *Horav Kaplan* was surprised to hear her concern since there was plenty of time left until *Shabbos*. The woman turned to him and said, "Let me tell you about our past so you can better understand my anxiety regarding *Shabbos*. For many years of our marriage, we had no children. Finally, after many prayers and tears, Hashem granted us a child. Our son, however, seemed to be sickly, not developing like other children, always listless. We were distressed. We traveled to the greatest specialists, who told us that we had no hope. Our son was stricken with a disease for which there was no cure.

We had nowhere to turn. On our way back from the doctor, we stopped at a hotel in Vilna for the night. As you can imagine, I could not contain myself. I broke out in bitter weeping, which was heard by many of the guests. They came to us and suggested that since we were going back to Mir, it would not be out of our way to stop in Radin and ask the sainted *Chofetz Chaim* to intercede on our behalf. We left for Radin, despite the fact that it was well known that the *Chofetz Chaim* was old and frail. He was no longer accepting visitors.

When we arrived in Radin with the help of the Almighty, we met the husband of the *Chofetz Chaim's* granddaughter, who used to board at our home in Mir. We told him our plight, and he immediately accompanied us to his grandfather. We were overwhelmed by the great *tzaddik* and *gaon*. I began to relate to him the occurrences of our life and the tragic situation confronting us at the moment. He responded by asking, "Do you begin *Shabbos* early?" I asked him to explain. He responded, "On *Erev Shabbos*, at *chatzos*, midday, your table should be set and the candelabra should be prepared for *Shabbos*. From the moment you light the candles, do not do any labor." Obviously, we followed the *Chofetz Chaim's* instructions, and immediately our son gradually began to recover. Slowly, our son was cured. When we related our story to the doctor who had given up hope on our son, he exclaimed, "I have the ability to mend what is broken, cure what is ill; I cannot create something from nothing. The *Chofetz Chaim* can!" Now you understand my concern that my husband has not yet returned. You see, *Shabbos* begins a little earlier in our house."

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It would serve all of us well to view this as not just another story, but rather a lesson in *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty.